

many times with personnel awards including Navy and Marine Corps Commendations Medals, three Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals, the Presidential Service Badge, and six Marine Corps Good Conduct Medals. For 20 years, he has helped make our country a safer place in which to live. I ask my colleagues in the 109th Congress to join me in congratulating him, and wishing him well in his retirement as well as all his future endeavors.

HURRICANE KATRINA

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to extend my deepest condolences to the victims of Hurricane Katrina, who lost their lives, their homes, their communities, and their livelihoods. My thoughts and prayers are with them and their families.

I have been very disappointed in what appears to have been a slow federal response to this disaster. In addition, many appeared to have ignored warnings over the years about the potential vulnerabilities and the steps that could be taken to prepare for this situation.

It is my hope that we can come together on a bipartisan basis and work to review and assess the adequacy of the early federal, state, and local preparedness. We must also continue to focus on providing immediate assistance to those in need. I am pleased that the Congress convened on an emergency basis to provide more than 10 billion dollars for disaster relief efforts and trust we are providing an additional \$52 billion today. In addition, I have been working with federal, state, and local officials to ensure that Maryland does everything it can to support the relief efforts. The State of Maryland has dispatched members of its National Guard and Montgomery County has dispatched search and rescue squad personnel. Other local governments are actively exploring ways that they can help. I am especially proud of the people throughout our community and country's outpouring of support for those whose lives have been shattered by Hurricane Katrina. They have opened their arms, their homes, and their pocketbooks.

Mr. Speaker, while the enormity of this tragedy is overwhelming, I am confident that a spirit of determination and generosity will ensure that we will rebuild and endure. Our strength as a nation will be evident in the days to come as communities throughout our country unite to provide assistance to those in need.

ON PASSAGE OF H.R. 3673

HON. TODD RUSSELL PLATTS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. PLATTS. Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Government Reform Subcommittee on Management, Finance, and Accountability, I rise today to express my concern for the victims and to emphasize the importance of ensuring that every dollar allocated to this relief effort gets to its intended recipient. As we

pass this important relief measure, let me assure all Americans that we stand ready, willing, and able to assist the victims of Hurricane Katrina. As we prepare to provide the appropriate and necessary assistance to ensure our citizens can rebuild their lives, we must administer these Disaster Assistance funds responsibly.

Over the past two years, my Subcommittee has held three hearings on management at the Department of Homeland Security. While not always the most exciting topic, it is strong, sound management that will enable us to get through a crisis of this magnitude. Last year, in the aftermath of the Florida hurricanes, FEMA administered grants through the Individuals and Households Program. Just as we seek to do today, these grants were intended to provide emergency relief to those most impacted. Unfortunately, according to a report by the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General (Audit of FEMA's Individuals and Households Program in Miami-Dade County, Florida, for Hurricane Frances, OIG-05-20), there were numerous documented instances of improper payments.

The assistance that we are providing to the victims of Hurricane Katrina is too important to be misspent. The Federal government has a responsibility to ensure the proper and effective distribution of aid. Any dollar lost to fraud or mismanagement is a dollar that does not make it to someone who is in need.

With the passage of the Stafford Act (Public Law 93-288) and its subsequent amendments, the Congress put in place specific requirements for the effective allocation of disaster funds. This statutory framework is designed to protect these resources from those who would seek to gain at the expense of the victims of disasters such as Hurricane Katrina. With sound management, appropriate controls and accountability, we will have the means to continue to provide resources to those who are truly in need of assistance.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR HURRICANE KATRINA

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of these supplemental appropriations for the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

As someone who helped rebuild my city, New York City, after the terror attacks of 9/11 and as someone who lost over 110 constituents, countless friends and my first cousin to the horrors of the World Trade Center, I know the pain and suffering the people of the Gulf Coast are feeling and their despair.

When America hurts, America helps.

The damage of Hurricane Katrina is much greater than the physical destruction that was left in its wake. And it is much more than the psychological trauma that has affected these survivors who are now displaced. The damage is so great, and the lack of response from our Federal Government in the immediate days after this storm was so small, that it begs for this Congress to demand answers.

Why was the agency that is responsible for our emergency response, FEMA, so woefully under-prepared and under-funded?

Why did the director of FEMA have no emergency management experience?

Why was funding for the Army Corps of Engineers designated to protect the City of New Orleans from a dangerous flood of this level, diverted to pay for tax cuts for the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans?

These questions demand answers.

Last week we saw many shocking images of poverty and economic disparities among us. Like many parts of many cities in this country, the tourist trodden French Quarter with fancy hotels and restaurants are worlds away from the reality for the people who work in them. One third of the city of New Orleans lived below the poverty line, and these people, mostly African American, were the ones who were most impacted by this storm and the mismanagement of the Federal response.

We also saw positive images of Americans helping Americans in need. We saw a young six year old boy; lead his siblings to safety and to be re-united with his family. We saw neighbors help out other neighbors to get them to safety, and we saw the National Guard many fresh off duty in Iraq, put on their boots and waded into the water to save lives.

This money today will provide an immediate infusion of cash to provide healthcare for displaced people, emergency housing vouchers for people without a home, emergency unemployment insurance for people now without a job, and money for debris removal and systems to provide clean water to the city of New Orleans.

This money partners with the amazing response of the American people and the world community to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Constituents throughout my district have volunteered their time, contributions and money to help the people of the Gulf remembering how these same people helped us after 9/11. When America hurts, America helps and the remarkable sacrifice and contributions of so many people who have opened up their wallets and homes to these victims is what makes our country so great.

Today's support is a strong step, but it not the last step. The last time this many people were displaced was during the Civil War. This Congress must get back to work in a bipartisan manner, and address the needs both immediate and future, of the victims of Hurricane Katrina. And we should not adjourn or recess until we do so. Tax-cuts, estate tax repeal, plans to privatize Social Security, should all take a back burner, while these people suffer.

We must work to bring the full Federal resources of this government to help these people get back into their homes and quickly as possible, and to rebuild their lives.

We must use this tragedy as an opportunity to improve the quality of life for these residents of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. For one-third of the people of the city of New Orleans to be living in poverty, sub-standard housing with poor healthcare, is inexcusable in this the richest country in the world. We must raise living standards through job training, better schools and stronger neighborhoods and eradicate the hopeless conditions so many Americans live in not only in the Gulf region but throughout our Nation. Let us use this terrible storm to learn a lesson and commit us to a new war on poverty that will truly bring Americans who are living in 19th Century poverty into the 21st Century through better housing, healthcare and education.